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General Assembly

Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

68th plenary meeting
Friday, 6 December 2002, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Mamba (Swaziland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

Fourth report of the General Committee (A/57/250/Add.3)

The Acting President: The General Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that an additional item, entitled "International Year of Rice, 2004", should be included in the agenda of the current session.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include in the agenda of the current session this additional item?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: The General Committee further decided to recommend to the General Assembly that the additional item should be considered directly in plenary meeting.

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to consider this item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I should like to inform members that the item entitled "International Year of Rice, 2004" becomes agenda item 168.

Agenda items 21 and 37 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(d) Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan

The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/57/410, A/57/487)

Draft resolution (A/57/L.56)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the General Assembly adopted resolution 57/8 under these items, at its 47th plenary meeting, on 11 November 2002.

By paragraph 1 of resolution 57/8, the General Assembly decided to convene an Open-ended Panel on Afghanistan on 18 November 2002. In paragraph 5 of the same resolution, the General Assembly decided that the President of the General Assembly would present a summary of the discussions of the Open-ended Panel at

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02-72982 (E)

the beginning of the debate on 6 December 2002, which is today.

I will now present, on behalf of the President, a summary of the discussions of the Open-ended Panel.

We are gathered here today to consider items dealing with Afghanistan. As the international community and Afghanistan marked the one-year anniversary of the Bonn Agreement this week, our debate provides an excellent opportunity to take stock of the situation and glean the lessons learned from the past year. In that connection, I would like to report to the Assembly that on 18 November 2002, the General Assembly convened an Open-ended Panel on Afghanistan, in accordance with its resolution 57/8. As members will recall, the resolution also requested the President to present a summary of the discussions of the Panel to the General Assembly prior to its debate on Afghanistan. The Panel engendered lively interactive discussions, as well as concrete proposals, on a number of important issues pertaining to Afghanistan, which I am pleased to report to the Assembly today.

At the outset of the Panel sessions, messages from Secretary-General Kofi Annan and President Hamid Karzai were read out. They both acknowledged the tremendous progress that had been accomplished in Afghanistan but noted that many challenges remained, and they welcomed the timely convening of the Panel.

The Panel held two sessions: one focused on political issues and the other on economic issues. Mr. Kieran Prendergast, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, moderated the first session, which heard from four panellists. They were Mr. Jean Arnault, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan; Mr. Amin Farhang, Minister of Reconstruction of the Afghanistan Transitional Administration; Mr. Ahmed Rashid, Correspondent for the *Far Eastern Economic Review* and the *Daily Telegraph*; and Mr. Barnett Rubin, Director of Studies at the Center for International Cooperation, New York University.

The overarching theme of both the panellists' presentations and the subsequent discussion was the importance of reconstruction, security and institution-building. There was agreement on the need to quicken the pace of reconstruction and enhance security. It was stated that reconstruction and security issues go hand in hand, and that real progress on those two issues was essential to the legitimacy of the Afghan Government and the Bonn process itself. Many comments also placed Afghanistan in its regional context, and reiterated the fact that rebuilding Afghan State institutions and providing security within Afghanistan would play an important role in regional development.

For the session on economic issues, the panellists were Mr. Bernard Frahi, head of the regional office for South-West Asia of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; Mr. Mukesh Kapila, former Special Adviser to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan; Mr. Eric Morris, Director of the New York Liaison Office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; and Ms. Julia Taft, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of the United Nations Development Programme. Mr. Ishaq Naderi, Professor at New York University and Senior Economic Adviser to President Karzai, participated in the discussion. Mr. David Malone, President of the International Peace Academy, moderated the session.

During the second session, the Panel considered a broad spectrum of issues, including aid disbursement, refugees, drugs and the status of women. On aid, the discussion focused on the channels of disbursement as well as on whether Afghanistan should move towards a consultative group process. Some participants raised concerns regarding reports of former refugees leaving Afghanistan again. Also, a number of questions were raised regarding medium-term policies for combating drugs. Overall, there were many calls for capacity-building, cross-sectoral approaches to reconstruction and sustained levels of donor commitment to Afghanistan.

Both panels yielded specific recommendations that might be considered by the General Assembly in its discussion on matters pertaining to Afghanistan.

Specific proposals relating to political issues included the following: the need to address the link between security and the political process, and in particular for the international community to take a more proactive and imaginative approach to improving security; the need for enhanced cooperation for the formation and training of the new Afghan army; and the need for donors to recognize the importance of supporting the Afghan national census. The United Nations should play a coordinating role in the international community's support for the electoral

process. An international summit should be called by the United Nations to launch a new regional mechanism that would include Afghanistan, its neighbours and, possibly, other relevant countries. This group should be given a mandate to focus on common regional issues and should be able to report issues of non-interference to the Security Council.

Specific proposals relating to economic issues included the need for sustained levels of donor resources and international attention to Afghanistan and for coordinated strategies that cut across sectors to address drug cultivation. In particular, capacity-building for police and cooperation with regional States are crucial components in combating drugs. More reconciliation efforts are needed to create an environment conducive to the return of minorities to their place of origin. Capacity-building in the private sector should not be overlooked.

I hope that these ideas and proposals raised in the panel will stimulate the debate that we are about to have and inform the conclusions we draw, as well as the resolution we will adopt on Afghanistan.

I now call on the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/57/L.56.

Mr. Pleuger (Germany): I have the honour to introduce this year's draft resolution on Afghanistan under items 37 and 21 (d) of the agenda of the General Assembly. Please allow me to underscore from the outset that Germany fully aligns itself with the statement of the European Union that will be made later by Denmark in its capacity as the Presidency of the European Union.

The date for the discussion and adoption of this year's draft resolution on Afghanistan was deliberately chosen by my delegation, in conjunction with the Secretariat, to commemorate the first anniversary of the Bonn Agreement. One year ago, representatives of Afghanistan met in Bonn, under the auspices of the United Nations, to discuss the future of their country. One year ago, the Afghans took their future into their own hands, seized an historic opportunity, ended a cycle of brutal civil war and poverty, and concluded the Bonn Agreement. The Agreement paved the way for a new start for Afghanistan — for a better future that holds the prospect of political stability, economic reconstruction and peaceful development.

In the past year, Afghanistan has come a long way in many respects. The Emergency Loya Jirga was successfully held in June. President Karzai was elected and the Transitional Authority was established and will remain in office until the elections planned for 2004. The commissions mandated under the Bonn Agreement have been established. The Afghan police and army have been reconstituted and are being built up as a matter of priority. Afghanistan has a new currency. Economic life is reviving. Humanitarian aid is reaching those in need and schools are open once again.

At the same time, much remains to be done. We are all aware that it will take enormous effort and many years to achieve lasting stability in the country. The key impediment to the full implementation of the Bonn Agreement is the still precarious security environment and the limited authority of the Transitional Authority in the provinces. In this regard, I commend the important decision made by President Karzai last Monday in Bonn to substantially reform and restructure the Afghan army. However, the increase of terrorist incidents in Kabul since the Emergency Loya Jirga, especially the attack against President Karzai, constitutes a source of serious concern.

Therefore, the United Nations and the international community must remain committed to Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan will gain courage when they see that the international community continues to care about them. The conference that my Government convened earlier this week in Bonn responded to those feelings by sending a clear signal to the Afghan people: "We stand by you".

This year's draft resolution, as found in document A/57/L.56 and which I have the honour to introduce today, renews that message to the Afghan people on behalf of the United Nations. It has been drafted jointly by many delegations in a spirit of support for the people and Government of Afghanistan. The large number of sponsors — more than 120 — is yet another sign that, despite crises in other regions, Afghanistan still tops the international community's list of priorities.

Let me quickly highlight some of the key aspects of the text. This year's draft resolution had to incorporate the new political situation in Afghanistan following the conclusion of the Bonn Agreement. It also takes into account the views expressed in the

General Assembly's recent panel discussion that you, Sir, summarized just now.

It welcomes the positive developments taking place in Afghanistan, including the peaceful convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga, the election of President Karzai as Head of State and the establishment of the Transitional Authority and the commissions mandated under the Bonn Agreement. Furthermore, the draft resolution reaffirms the central role of the United Nations in international assistance efforts, calls for continued international support for the Transitional Authority in the implementation of the Bonn Agreement and endorses their priorities.

However, the draft resolution also emphasizes that the main responsibility for a sustainable political solution lies with the Afghan people themselves. Unless all Afghan groups respect the authority of the Transitional Authority and cooperate fully to implement the Bonn Agreement, a lasting peace cannot be obtained. Security must be restored throughout the country as a precondition for successful political and economic reconstruction. Let me mention also that the illegal production of narcotic drugs must be eradicated.

This year's draft resolution further highlights the progress that has been made in the humanitarian field, including the return of a large number of refugees and internally displaced persons and the success of education and health programmes. The new text reflects the fact that the emphasis of international assistance is shifting from humanitarian aid to transitional and long-term development assistance. It endorses the priority of the Transitional Authority and the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in this context. However, more must be done. Economic and social reconstruction still have to follow the political settlement. This requires close collaboration of all actors within the United Nations system under the overall responsibility of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, but also with other humanitarian organizations, the international community, Afghan authorities and Afghan civil society. All donor countries that pledged financial aid at the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan held in Tokyo need to fulfil their assumed commitments and all States need to continue to provide humanitarian assistance and support the Transitional Authority through actual funding.

For many years now, Germany has shown a special commitment to Afghanistan, bilaterally as well as within the United Nations. This builds on a long-standing tradition of exchange between the Afghan and German peoples in the cultural and academic sectors. The present German commitment embraces, inter alia, many projects in the spheres of education and human rights, as well as the lead role in setting up the Afghan police force. From day one, we seconded a considerable number of troops to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). And, together with the Netherlands, Germany will assume the leadership of ISAF in the coming weeks. Furthermore, for over a decade, my delegation has taken pride in introducing the General Assembly's resolution on Afghanistan.

These efforts are made on the understanding that the international community must help the Afghan people find their way to a stable, peaceful and unified State. Many interested States and groups have contributed and still need to contribute to these goals. I would like to stress the key role of the United Nations in this context. The United Nations is and will remain the key body to aid and support our Afghan friends in rebuilding their society, their economy and their country. The United Nations has admirably assumed these tasks.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General, his Special Representative, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, and the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan for their tireless efforts. Germany will continue to consistently support the United Nations efforts in this area with all the means at its disposal. We hope jointly to achieve the goal of a peaceful and free Afghanistan that will play its part in ensuring the region's long-term stability.

Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan): I would like to express our gratitude to Mr. Jan Kavan, President of the General Assembly, for having convened on 18 November 2002 an open-ended panel of the General Assembly entitled "Afghanistan: One Year Later". The outcome of the debate in that panel contributed positively to the formulation of this year's General Assembly resolutions on Afghanistan. On behalf of the Afghan Government, I express my thanks to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, for his keen attention to the situation in Afghanistan and for the comprehensive report dated 21 October 2002 on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace

and security. We appreciate the tireless efforts of Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan.

Last year on 5 December 2001, under the auspices of the United Nations, representatives of Afghanistan's major parties signed the Bonn Agreement. On 2 December 2002, the anniversary of the Bonn Agreement was commemorated. President Karzai, many of his colleagues and his eminent German hosts participated in the event in which useful talks were also held on the needs of Afghanistan.

The timely and smooth implementation of the Bonn Agreement is a significant episode in the recent history of Afghanistan. The strong political will of major Afghan parties contributed highly to this felicitous development. The considerable achievements during the past 12 months in Afghanistan have been reported in detail by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Brahimi, in his regular briefings and in the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council. Likewise, in our statements to the United Nations during the open debates on Afghanistan, we have provided information about the positive developments in Afghanistan, in different stages of the implementation of the Bonn Agreement.

Among major developments in Afghanistan, we would like to enumerate the following, which should be compared to the situation under the oppressive and brutal rule of the Taliban.

First, the return of peace and stability has prompted massive returns of refugees from neighbouring countries, numbering, according to recent figures, around 2 million, almost one tenth of the country's population. Secondly, the "Back to School" campaign was a major success for the Afghan Ministry of Education assisted by the United Nations Children's Fund. More than 3 million children were enrolled in school. Girls already make up 30 per cent of the total student population and girls' enrolment has increased nearly 90 per cent since March 2002. Thirdly, the resumption of the role of women and their active involvement in the political, social, and economic life of the country was another major change during the past 12 months. The Ministry for Women's Affairs has been most active. Fourthly, the establishment in Kabul of the Independent Human Rights Commission, the Judiciary Commission, the Civil Service Commission and the Committee for the Drafting of the Constitution are other significant developments in the country in the past 12 months. Fifthly, the successful convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga, and the election of President Karzai as head of State was an outstanding achievement. Sixthly, the introduction of the new Afghan currency was a major economic initiative that also contributes to the unity of the country.

Despite considerable achievements in the past 12 months, which is a short period in the context of the history of a nation, countless problems and challenges remain. Operation Enduring Freedom, against Al-Qaeda/Taliban remnants, continues, mainly in a few areas in the east, south-east and south-west of the country. Some terrorist activities have been carried out against the civilian population and government officials, including the tragic assassination of the late Vice-President Haji Qadir, the attempt on the life of President Karzai and failed plots against Marshal Qasim Fahim, Vice-President and Minister of Defence of Afghanistan.

The Al-Qaeda/Taliban remnants and their extremist allies have not hidden their hostility towards President Karzai's Government and towards the campaign against terrorism in the region. Nor have the extremists abandoned the use of violence as an instrument to undermine the Government and hamper the consolidation of peace in the country. Those terrorist activities and some recent political developments in the region require vigilance and could be considered to require strengthening and the acceleration of the formation, training and equipping of a national army and national police for Afghanistan. A national Afghan army is highly needed, inter alia to fight against terrorism and extremism, as recent operations have proved.

As rightly indicated by the Secretary-General in paragraph 53 of his report of 21 October 2002 (A/57/487), in order to confront those threats the Transitional Authority of Afghanistan, with the support of the international community, has several tools at its disposal. One is reconstruction. We strongly support that perception. The reconstruction of the physical, economic and social infrastructure of Afghanistan has a direct impact on the consolidation of peace and security in Afghanistan. Creating jobs and providing social services and economic opportunities are necessary to re-establish hope and confidence among the population and enhance the credibility and

authority of the central Government. Furthermore, the intensive reconstruction work and the materialization of quick-impact projects are sorely needed. That would help the strategy to eradicate the cultivation of poppies, which requires providing a substitute crop and a viable economic livelihood for farmers.

Security in Afghanistan therefore cannot exist without launching the reconstruction of the infrastructure. That requires adequately vast international assistance, and donors are increasingly conscious of that need. That will make possible the employment of hundreds of thousands of workers all over Afghanistan. Employment will deprive many local leaders of their armed followers, and will prompt them to become leaders and managers of reconstruction. All of the country's ethnic groups will unite and will find business and employment in the work of reconstruction.

For the time being, only one major project — the highway linking Kabul, Kandahar and Herat — has been funded. Construction work will only start after the winter, by March 2003. Reconstruction also requires highways in the north, west and centre of the country. Funds for those projects have been promised but not yet provided, while one year has been lost without the construction of any highway.

Afghanistan has to become a transit and transport crossroads of trade from the east to the west and from the north to the south, linking the Middle East and Central and South Asia. That has been the country's pivotal economic role of the country for many centuries. In recent years, natural gas and petroleum pipelines have become a component of that regional trade. We hope that it shall be part of the future infrastructure landscape of Afghanistan. There are also vast possibilities to exploit the mineral and underground wealth of Afghanistan.

The Transitional Authority of Afghanistan has prepared and adopted a National Development Framework that includes a national development budget. The past year has shown, however, that most of the contributions and assistance to Afghanistan have been channelled through bodies other than the Afghan Government. This year's draft resolution of the General Assembly on Afghanistan clearly indicates that the international community should channel its assistance through the Afghan Government and focus its attention on the capacity-building of Afghans. The draft resolution on Afghanistan also mentions that the pledges made in Tokyo in January 2002 are not sufficient for the recovery and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan. Additional resources are needed to meet the enormous task of recovery and reconstruction.

The Emergency Loya Jirga elected President Karzai in a secret ballot. The introduction of secret ballots in the voting process is a major development in the proceedings of that traditional assembly, which was successful in forming a broad-based, multi-ethnic Government. As a result, no segment of the Afghan population has been disenfranchised. Another basic component of the Bonn Agreement is the preparation for elections to be held in the middle of 2004. We are fully committed to that process and to the holding of a free and fair election. The realization of that process requires the helping hand of the international community in the form of legal assistance and budgetary help.

Before concluding, allow me to express the gratitude of the Government and the people of Afghanistan to the fraternal nation of Turkey, for having led the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) for the past six months. I would also like to extend our welcome to Germany and the Netherlands for assuming the leadership of ISAF for the coming year.

I have to thank Ambassador Gunter Pleuger, Permanent Representative of Germany, who has just introduced the draft resolution on Afghanistan, as well as his colleagues, for the great service they have rendered – that of consulting all those Member States and delegations interested in Afghanistan with respect to the drafting of both sections of the draft resolution on Afghanistan. The German Mission has been highly efficient and helpful in this matter for many years.

We hope that, as in previous years, the draft resolution will be adopted by consensus, without the need for a vote.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta, and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries members of

the European Economic Area Iceland and Liechtenstein align themselves with this statement.

First of all, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for the latest reports on Afghanistan and to commend the excellent work of his Special Representative, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi. The European Union is confident that Mr. Brahimi and his staff will continue to encourage the Afghan partners to move forward in a manner consistent with the Bonn Agreement.

When Afghanistan was discussed in the Security Council on 19 July, we took stock of the progress made since the signing of the Bonn Agreement. The challenges back then looked daunting, but today we have to conclude that progress has indeed been made. However, many issues are still outstanding.

The European Union welcomes the fact that several of the critical steps in the Bonn Agreement have been initiated. The Constitutional Drafting Commission, the Independent Human Rights Commission and the Judicial Commission have been created and should begin their work without delay. The Cabinet has agreed on the much-needed reform of the national army. The presentation of the National Development Framework and Budget clearly demonstrated the Afghan ownership of the development process. The first preparations being made for the upcoming consultative group meeting in March 2003 reinforce the impression that the Transitional Administration has clear priorities and goals, and that it is capable of showing leadership towards achieving these goals.

In our view, the discussion today should be forward-looking and focus on the processes that have to be put in place and the milestones that have to be achieved in order to secure a desirable future for Afghanistan. Many challenges lie ahead in the period leading up to one of the most crucial milestones — the 2004 elections. The European Union strongly encourages the Afghan Transitional Administration and the United National Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to quickly move forward with preparations for the 2004 elections, with the ultimate aim of establishing a multi-ethnic, gender-sensitive, broad-based and truly representative Government. A first step to ensure free and fair elections would be to establish an independent electoral commission to oversee the process.

Another key issue is the Government's efforts to expand its influence beyond the capital. As is pointed out in the Secretary-General's report, the Transitional Administration's ability to fulfil its ambitious objectives has been stalled by limitations in its ability to impose its authority nationwide. Therefore, we must also be ready to stand up against the forces that seek to block implementation of the Bonn Agreement — be they internal or external.

Looking at other key issues, the European Union finds it worrying that poppy cultivation has increased in Afghanistan. We stand ready to assist the Transitional Authority in the development and implementation of comprehensive, coordinated programmes aimed at eliminating illicit poppy cultivation.

The human rights situation has improved, but much more remains to be done, in particular with respect to women's rights. The Bonn Agreement committed the Transitional Administration to ensure respect for human rights, yet we remain concerned about reports of violations of human rights law and of international humanitarian law in parts of the country.

A year has passed since the signing of the Bonn Agreement, and one could have hoped that by now security would no longer be a major concern. However, the report of the Secretary-General describes a deteriorating security climate. Many European Union member States, as well as associated countries, have contributed troops to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which has significantly improved the security situation in and around Kabul. The Netherlands and Germany will take over as the new ISAF lead no later than 15 February 2003.

In order to achieve lasting peace and security, the Afghan national army and police must be strengthened. European Union member States are actively participating in efforts to reform the Afghan security sector. The recent reform plan for the Afghan national army is evidence that the Government is taking serious steps towards ensuring nationwide control.

The extent and speed of return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan and Iran in 2002 have surpassed all expectations. The voluntary, orderly and safe return of Afghan refugees and of internally displaced persons, as well as their successful reintegration, constitute a major challenge that should be addressed in the context of efforts to ensure political stability.

So far, humanitarian needs have been in the foreground, but emphasis is already moving towards transitional and long-term development assistance. It is crucial that humanitarian and reconstruction activities be properly coordinated. With the creation of UNAMA and the use of an integrated approach, the United Nations agencies have come a long way towards a more rational use of donor resources. The European Union encourages UNAMA to continue its important coordinating role in the whole of Afghanistan.

The European Union has responded with large-scale assistance to the humanitarian and reconstruction needs of Afghanistan. We remain strongly committed to providing the necessary humanitarian assistance and to delivering a substantial contribution to the reconstruction of Afghanistan. To keep the process on track and to integrate the many new reform initiatives and processes, we welcome all the commitments made at Petersberg earlier this week.

Historically, Afghanistan's relations with its neighbours have been difficult. Now is the time to bring an end to harmful interference from outsiders in Afghanistan's peace-building process. The European Union wholeheartedly supports the efforts being made to adopt a declaration of good-neighbourly relations.

The European Union has its own experience with regional cooperation. We know that peace among nations can be secured through regional cooperation and integration. The European Union stands ready to share our experience and expertise in this area with Afghanistan and its neighbours.

Mr. Zarif (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to begin by expressing my thanks to the Secretary-General for his personal commitment to Afghanistan and for his comprehensive and informative quarterly reports, presented over the past year on various aspects of the situation in Afghanistan. I would also like to thank his Special Representative, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, for his unsparing efforts to restore peace and security to Afghanistan. Undoubtedly, the role that Lakhdar Brahimi and his colleagues are playing is extremely important in bringing about a lasting political settlement of the Afghan crisis.

One year after the conclusion of the Bonn Agreement, we can look back with satisfaction and observe the considerable progress made by the Afghan people, led by President Karzai and the Transitional Administration, towards restoring peace and stability to their war-stricken country. In the past year, the Afghans successfully completed or set in motion several key provisions of the Agreement, among which the establishment of the Transitional Administration at the closing of the successful Emergency Loya Jirga last June and the initiation of the difficult institution-building process figure prominently.

Those developments, which followed the ouster of the Taliban and the dispersal of Al-Qaeda, opened a realistic prospect for the establishment of a broad-based, representative and multi-ethnic Government in Afghanistan. We are delighted to note that these developments have created real hope that the ground work can be laid to enable the Afghans to rebuild their country and reconstruct friendly ties with their neighbours. For my Government, whose national security interest is best served by the restoration of peace and stability in Afghanistan, the new road on which the Afghans have embarked is a cause for pleasure and delight. We are hopeful that the new environment can lead to the sustained resolution of endemic problems in Afghanistan.

However, there is, quite rightly, broad agreement within and outside Afghanistan that, despite the progress achieved, there is no room for complacency. Very much to our chagrin as a neighbour, the course of events in that country clearly demonstrates that enemies of peace have yet to lose hope of obstructing the way to normalcy and disrupting efforts to restore stability.

In various fields, including that of security — and despite significant progress — the Government's efforts to extend its control and influence across the country are yet to come to fruition. There are signs indicating that those groups that are hostile to the peace process are sparing no effort to revive their activities. The assassination attempt on President Karzai in September, the murder of Vice-President Haji Qadir and several bombing incidents in Kabul and elsewhere, demonstrate the fragility of the situation. At the same time, those groups and individuals are actively trying to take advantage of popular frustration resulting from the slow progress in some areas. They should not be allowed to challenge the peace in Afghanistan. Concerted efforts at the local, regional and international levels are needed to address problems and thwart those groups.

Given that the collapse of law and order is a key factor, the extremist elements may benefit from the lingering centrifugal tendencies and ongoing conflicts between rival groups in different regions. While some headway in establishing the authority of the central Government in some areas, such as Gardez, is promising, in general, attempts by the Government to persuade the regional leaders to move to Kabul and to put an end to the activities of armed groups in the country have yet to be crowned with success.

In this context, the submission of revenues to the central Government by two regional leaders, including Ismael Khan of Herat — as referred to by the Secretary-General — is a sign of progress and a step towards strengthening the hand of the central Government. It is noteworthy that, as the Secretary-General indicates in his report, the western region of Afghanistan along the Iranian border also continues to be relatively calm. The efforts by the Government to extend its influence beyond Kabul, together with a number of economic undertakings, are a move in the right direction and could reinforce the political and economic unity of the country.

We concur with the Secretary-General that the most serious challenge facing Afghanistan today remains the lack of security, which in turn creates a vicious circle, reinforcing the resistance to giving up weapons. The most urgent priority, therefore, should be the creation of a national army and police force. There is a need to increase efforts to provide speedy international assistance for the establishment and deployment of the Afghan national army and police force throughout the country. Eventually, ensuring peace, security and order should be the responsibility of such an Afghan national army and police force. In contributing to this process, my Government has thus far assisted the Afghan authorities by training 400 Afghan police.

We regret to learn from the Secretary-General's report that the planting of next year's poppy crop has already begun. The United Nations Drug Control Programme had already estimated the poppy production to be 3,400 tons this year. The lack of livelihood and the absence of viable economic alternatives can by no means justify the indulgence in poppy cultivation and drug-trafficking. The hand of international gangs and their local accomplices can easily be seen in the drug business in Afghanistan. It is obvious that the profits drawn from drug-trafficking feed the activities of extremist elements and centrifugal forces. Moreover, the illicit drug-smuggling networks also serve as a conduit for the illegal transfer of arms and explosives, as well as for human trafficking. While we commend the determination and efforts of the Transitional Authority in dealing with traffickers in drugs, we believe that more forceful actions are still needed on the part of the Afghan authorities and the international community.

In the face of the worrisome increase in opium production in Afghanistan and the more dreadful picture that looms ahead, we believe that the definition of a comprehensive anti-narcotics strategy should figure prominently on the agenda of the Afghan authorities and the international community. Such a strategy should address all aspects of the problem, including alternative development, enforcement policy and demand reduction. If unchecked, the drug crisis may exacerbate the situation in Afghanistan and undermine and even reverse the progress thus far achieved.

Over the past year, my Government demonstrated its determination to develop a good and mutually beneficial relationship with the new Government in Kabul, based on mutual respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and non-intervention in each other's internal affairs. The development of such relations culminated in the exchange of presidential visits and the conclusion of several agreements between the two countries, especially in the economic field.

Moreover, in order to tap regional resources and capacities for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, a meeting of ministers of finance from Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, organized by the United Nations Development Programme, was held in May in Tehran. The ministers signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation for development and also decided to establish a follow-up mechanism.

The return of 1.7 million refugees to their homes in Afghanistan is a strong sign indicating the hope that the Afghans continue to harbour. The fact that they might not be able to find an appropriate and bearable environment or settle down and blend in is cause for concern. No doubt the onset of winter will add to their difficulties. This further underlines the imperative need for more expeditious international humanitarian and reconstruction assistance.

With regard to the voluntary return of refugees from the Islamic Republic of Iran to Afghanistan, we are fully committed to the thorough implementation of the trilateral agreement, signed with the Afghan authorities and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. At the same time, and in line with our policy of combating terrorism, we have stepped up security measures along the common border and frontier areas, which has resulted in the frequent arrest of undocumented Afghans and of non-Afghans suspected of illegal entry and other activities. Over the past year, we have extradited hundreds of such detainees to their Governments.

Finally, reports indicating that specific ethnic groups — particularly Pashtuns in western and northern Afghanistan — continue to be targeted and are victims of discrimination and violence are a cause for concern. We believe that, in an Afghan society where there is an urgent need for the healing of wounds and for the closing of ethnic gaps, such incidents could damage and poison the environment — an environment in which each and every Afghan from each and every ethnic background should contribute to the restoration of peace and stability.

Before concluding, I should like to express our satisfaction at sponsoring draft resolution A/57/L.56, which highlights, inter alia, the international community's commitment to helping the Afghans to rebuild their country. I should like to express our appreciation to the delegation of Germany for its excellent work in carrying out the negotiations and consultations for that draft resolution.

Mr. Williamson (United States of America): The United States thanks the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, for his leadership and good work.

This General Assembly celebration of the first anniversary of the Bonn Agreement is a clear reflection of the international community's continued commitment to the people of Afghanistan. The United States agrees that this is an occasion for the United Nations and its Member States not only to celebrate the concrete achievements of the past year but also, and more important, to rededicate ourselves to the many tasks that remain to be done.

Rebuilding a nation devastated by a quarter century of conflict, by immense population movements and by natural disasters remains a daunting task and will be so for many years to come. Over the past year, the road map of the Bonn Agreement has provided an outline of goals, guideposts and timelines, which have helped to keep the process on track. Operation Enduring Freedom, led by the United States, gave the Afghan people the chance to rid themselves of a terrorist parasite as well as of a repressive Government whose stock-in-trade was violating the most basic human rights. The Emergency Loya Jirga, the selection of the most broadly representative Government that Afghanistan has ever had, the beginning of reconstruction, the return of women to visible roles in Afghanistan, the opening of schools to boys and girls, and the launching of an enormous programme of humanitarian relief represent real achievements. More than 2 million refugees have given a clear vote of confidence in the new Afghanistan through their return to their homes in Afghanistan.

Nonetheless, Afghanistan's recovery is incomplete and fragile. We must not let founder what we have accomplished together thus far. The immediate humanitarian crisis faced last fall has receded, but winter is upon us again, and the international community must ensure that those most in need are cared for. And there are those who seek to return Afghanistan to chaos. We saw vivid and disturbing evidence of their existence in the attempted assassination of President Karzai, in continued attacks on coalition forces and on international aid workers, and in a series of bombings in Kabul that killed innocent civilians. Full success in combating terrorism is a precondition for Afghanistan's long-term stability, and the coalition forces of Operation Enduring Freedom continue to hunt down and destroy the remnants of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

The United States believes that the United Nations and its Member States share with the Afghan people the common goal of seeing Afghanistan resume its proper place in the international community, enjoying a stable, broadly representative Government; a Government that respects human rights for all of its citizens, without regard to race, ethnicity, religion or gender; a nation at peace with itself and its neighbours; a nation that offers an economically sound and prosperous future for its people; an Afghanistan that never again becomes a haven for international terrorism. In order to turn that shared goal into reality, the international community must intensify its

partnership with the Afghan Government and find ways to increase its reach and effectiveness.

In that context, the international community must make the transition from humanitarian assistance to reconstruction. We should focus on projects that will help Afghans to help themselves. We must fully explore the role and the experience of the private sector, and we must be prepared to shift assistance when needs dictate. Only through reconstruction and broad education and effective development can Afghanistan break the hold of opium poppy production on its people. Illicit drugs must be eradicated. The international community must dedicate itself to redoubling its efforts and must find a way to devote more resources to reconstruction, while continuing to meet ongoing humanitarian needs.

The financial contributions of the United States have already far exceeded those pledged at the Tokyo donors conference 11 months ago. Through the end of September 2002, the United States had committed and spent $568.6 million to assist Afghanistan. Many other donors have come through with generous contributions as well, although significant unmet Tokyo commitments remain. However, the hard reality is that Afghanistan's requirements are proving to be much larger than were anticipated at Tokyo. Moreover, the severity of Afghanistan's humanitarian emergency absorbed a much higher percentage of the funds pledged at Tokyo than the donor community had anticipated.

On 12 September, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Japan joined the United States in announcing support for the rebuilding and rehabilitation of the Kabul-Kandahar-Herat highway, and we broke ground on the project on 10 November, less than two months later. The United States pledged $80 million; the Japanese, $50 million; and the Government of Saudi Arabia, $30 million. Yet, even such large sums will not cover the total cost. We look to others to join us in this worthwhile project to link traditional trade routes within Afghanistan and the region, as the Asian Development Bank and Japan are doing on the Spin Boldak-Kandahar road and as the European Community and others are doing on the Torkham-Kabul road.

Large-scale projects increase the efficiency of trade and commerce, provide desperately needed jobs, provide a clear symbol of national unity and knit the region together, strengthening Afghanistan as a land bridge between Central Asia and the world's sea lanes. However, such large-scale projects must not come at the expense of other necessary assistance in education, agriculture and health — particularly that which most directly supports the Transitional Authority and President Karzai. The Afghan people must begin to see tangible and visible signs of reconstruction throughout Afghanistan, and the international community must do its part to make that vision a reality.

We should be dedicated to an accelerated reconstruction process, the rebuilding of Afghanistan's security institutions, effective aid that meets Afghans' humanitarian needs and the full funding of Afghanistan's recurring budget. Achievement of those goals will mean that the international community is living up to its commitment to the people of Afghanistan.

While noting that the United States is not a party to the Ottawa Convention, the United States joins the consensus in supporting the draft resolutions on Afghanistan.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I wish to express my gratitude to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the report he has submitted on the situation in Afghanistan (A/57/410), in which he has clarified the events that have occurred in the political, economic and humanitarian spheres in Afghanistan during the past year. The Secretary-General has also provided in his report comprehensive information on the work of the Transitional Authority of Afghanistan in implementing the Bonn Agreement on temporary mechanisms in Afghanistan pending the restoration of permanent governmental institutions.

Exactly a year ago, the international community witnessed an historic event in the life of Afghanistan — the signing by the Afghan parties in Bonn of an agreement on peace and reconstruction in Bonn that gives the Afghan people an opportunity to break the vicious cycle of conflict and abject poverty, begin a new life, provide for reconstruction and peaceful development and for the country's full integration into the international community. In its resolution 1383 (2001), the Security Council approved the Bonn Agreement and has called on all Afghan groups to fully implement that Agreement.

In assessing the current situation in Afghanistan, it is comforting to note that today the general situation

in the country is substantially more positive than was the case a little more than a year ago. In that context, I would first point out the role of the United Nations system, particularly of Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, headed by Mr. Brahimi, in support of the efforts of the Afghan people in rebuilding and reorganizing Afghanistan. However, it is obvious that the situation in Afghanistan and the bordering territories is still far from being fully resolved, because the international community was indifferent for a decade to the fact that that country was being turned into a staging area for all kinds of fanatics and extremists who had been sustained by illegal drug and weapons trafficking and other activities.

Despite recent successes in the fight against terrorism, the threat of international terrorism remains. It is critically important in that regard to continue interaction to eradicate that scourge. In that context, the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), on the fight against terrorism, and resolution 1390 (2002), regarding sanctions against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, is essential.

We are particularly alarmed by the growing production of drugs and by the existence of one the most powerful routes in Afghanistan. International drug trade, which has tremendous financial and other resources, is very powerful and very well organized. It has cornered virtually the entire world and threatens the lives of millions of people. We welcome the decrees and decisions adopted by the Transitional Authority in Afghanistan on controlling drug traffic and conducting a campaign to eradicate poppy cultivation in that country.

We are also concerned about growing poppy production in various regions of the country. In that context, we are seriously alarmed by the prediction made in the report by the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (ODCCP) that the overall trends of illegal dissemination of drugs in the country are such that in 2002 the production of Afghan opium might reach the level seen in the mid-1990s. Unfortunately, those numerous programmes, which are now being implemented under the auspices of various international organizations, and the measures we have taken to fight that threat in the Central Asian region are poorly coordinated. They do not have adequate financial or material resource support.

The fight against drug production and export requires multilateral cooperation. In Uzbekistan, we believe that the fight against the illicit production of and trade in drugs in Afghanistan must not only be conducted by intensifying punitive and administrative measures and creating a so-called security belt around the country and the territory where the drugs are being produced. The fight against drugs, first and foremost, must be carried out through fundamental structural transformations of the Afghan economy by providing employment to people and creating conditions for peaceful and constructive work and for education.

Although the situation in Kabul remains relatively calm, the security conditions in other major cities and population centres are extremely unstable. They still have the potential of creating countrywide destabilization.

In addition to the actions of the remnants of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, who are openly opposing the Bonn process, the presence of various armed groups continues to pose a threat to peacekeeping and civilian rule in Afghanistan. We welcome the efforts of donor countries to assist in the prompt establishment of a national army and police force in Afghanistan. We also share the opinion of the Secretary-General that with conditions where there are no effective national security forces and no expansion of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the threat to international peace and security in Afghanistan will persist, which could seriously undermine political efforts and measures to rebuild the country. In that regard, we believe that it is essential to give ISAF, which was created by Security Council resolution 1386 (2001), a mandate for its presence in areas outside of Kabul.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the United Kingdom and Turkey for their effective leadership of ISAF during 2002. We also welcome Security Council resolution 1444 (2002), recently adopted, on extending the mandate of ISAF for one year. We also welcome the willingness of Germany and the Netherlands to assume leadership of ISAF in 2003.

In Afghanistan for more than 20 years, there has been a tremendous build-up of the arsenal of military technology, weapons and artillery which could create conditions for the re-emergence of local armed resistance. In this regard, we draw your attention to the

initiative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Mr. Karimov, which he put forward to the Secretary-General in December 2001 on the demilitarization of Afghanistan. This initiative calls for a reduction and full elimination of weapons, especially heavy weapons, among the Afghan population.

We support the efforts of the international community to step up measures in order to implement wide-ranging programmes for the post-conflict reconstruction of Afghanistan. On 4 and 5 March 2002 there was a visit made by the President of the Afghan Transitional Authority, Mr. Karzai, to Uzbekistan, at the end of which the two countries signed a joint agreement on developing bilateral cooperation and on the participation of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the economic restoration of Afghanistan. In order to develop bilateral relations and effectively resolve consular and visa issues, we have opened diplomatic and consular offices in Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat. Uzbekistan is actively participating in the shipments of international humanitarian and economic assistance to Afghanistan, in close cooperation with the United Nations. For these purposes, Uzbekistan has provided all the requisite infrastructure, including infrastructure located in the town of Termez which is very close to the Afghan border.

The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan has adopted a decision on measures for support of Uzbekistan to the United Nations in the rendering of humanitarian assistance to the population of Afghanistan. Under this decision, the Ministry of Emergency Situations in the Republic is coordinating the work of the Ministries and agencies of the Republic of Uzbekistan to implement measures having to do with the rendering of humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan. The Ministry of Emergency Situations in Uzbekistan is doing a great deal to receive, register, store, put together and send to Afghanistan humanitarian shipments from various United Nations agencies, the Governments of a number of States, non-governmental organizations and private companies.

On 21 March 2002, Uzbekistan resumed delivery of hydroelectric power to Afghanistan. In order to provide support to the people of Afghanistan there are a number of Uzbek medics that have begun work. Uzbekistan welcomes and fully supports the results of the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan, held in Tokyo. Uzbekistan has the required experience in reconstruction, as well as technological potential and a developed infrastructure, to enable us to actively participate in international projects geared to the post-conflict reconstruction of Afghanistan.

In the opinion of experts of agencies and units of the United Nations, the companies and organizations of many States, including countries in Central Asia, do not have detailed information on mechanisms for implementing programmes and projects to restore and rebuild Afghanistan. In this regard, we welcome the initiative of the United Nations Development Programme to support the participation of companies, enterprises and private individuals from the States in Central Asia, within the framework of programmes and projects to restore and rebuild Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan again confirms its readiness to participate directly in international efforts to restore and rebuild Afghanistan. Based on this position, Uzbekistan is among the sponsors of the draft resolution submitted today for the Assembly's consideration and discussion, and we hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Gatilov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to make this statement under the instructions of the Permanent Representative of Russia, Ambassador Lavrov.

In the course of many years, the United Nations General Assembly was considering the situation in Afghanistan, keeping in mind the deep political and economic crisis in this country and the need to oppose the Taliban regime, which had in fact launched a civil war against its own people by providing support for international terrorism, encouraging the production and illicit trade of drugs, demolishing historical and cultural monuments in Afghanistan and brutally violating basic human rights.

Due first of all to the courage and the struggle of the Afghan people themselves, as well as to the collective efforts of the international community, with the United Nations playing an active role, the Taliban regime collapsed. A year ago, on 5 December 2001, a peace accord was signed in Bonn, designed to put an end to the tragic conflict in Afghanistan and encourage national reconciliation and lasting peace and stability in this country. Despite a short period of time, historically speaking, much has been achieved since then.

It can be stated that a working political system is being created in Afghanistan that reflects a fully representative and multi-ethnic character of the Afghan society, based on historical realities.

In June 2002, an Emergency Loya Jirga was held in Kabul. That event has become an important milestone in the post-war capacity-building of the country and has been a concrete step towards the achievement of national accord, the formation of sustainable authoritative institutions, as well as a stable political regime. Russia, together with the entire international community, welcomed the election of Mr. Hamid Karzai as the head of the Afghan Transitional Authority.

It goes without saying that a leading role in the Afghan settlement was played by the United Nations and, personally, by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi.

The United Nations Security Council reacted expeditiously to the developments in the country by adopting resolutions that positively affected the peace process. In particular, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan was established. The deployment of the International Security Assistance Force was authorized and international sanctions against the Taliban were appropriately adopted. At the same time, it is too early to conclude that the settlement in Afghanistan is close to completion. First, it is necessary to proceed to the end of the road map agreed to a year ago in Bonn, including the holding of the constitutional Loya Jirga and, in 2004, the general elections. The security situation in Afghanistan also remains critical. Recent missile shellings in Kabul and attacks on anti-terrorist coalition forces demonstrate that groups seeking to undermine the peace process are still in Afghanistan. One must not forget that many Taliban and Al-Qaeda followers are still hiding, waiting to take revenge. We must not give them that opportunity.

Russia supported the recent adoption of the Security Council resolution on the extension of the ISAF mandate for an additional one-year period. We welcome the readiness expressed by Germany and the Netherlands to take over the leadership of the Force. At the same time, it appears that in the long run only a strong Afghan army and national police can guarantee stability over the entire territory of Afghanistan. It is critical in that connection that the international community continues to maintain unity and provide wide support to the peace process in Afghanistan. We are convinced that that can only be achieved with the central coordinating role of the United Nations.

We are still facing the drug threat emanating from the territory of Afghanistan, and we must admit that the flow of drugs has recently increased. Russia believes that the establishment of an overall strategy under United Nations auspices, as well as practical measures, with the participation of countries neighbouring Afghanistan and the Afghan Government itself, to fight the illegal trade in and production of drugs in Afghanistan, are still acutely needed. We commend the efforts of the Transitional Administration in Afghanistan, actively supported by the international community, aimed at overcoming serious humanitarian problems and at addressing the immediate critical needs of the population — social and economic reconstruction and the development of the country. The past year has demonstrated the relevance of integrating humanitarian and long-term development assistance. It has reaffirmed the importance of national ownership in post-conflict peace-building and the subsequent development of Afghanistan.

It is also obvious that there is a need for more effective coordination of the efforts of bilateral donors, United Nations programmes and funds and international and non-governmental organizations. In our opinion, the main social and economic challenges in Afghanistan include the sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced persons, the provision of housing and safe drinking water to the population, reconstruction of the physical infrastructure and job creation. Additional efforts should be made to control poppy cultivation, including through introducing viable economic alternatives, to reintegrate ex-combatants into society and to implement the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan.

The Russian Federation is making its contribution to the economic rehabilitation of Afghanistan, including by participating in the provision and delivery of humanitarian assistance, the rebuilding of infrastructure and the implementation of projects in the fields of education and health. We are open to enhancing such cooperation in various fields. In our opinion, the draft resolution on Afghanistan, introduced today by the delegation of Germany on behalf of a large number of sponsors, both adequately

reflects the successful results achieved so far and proposes relevant tasks for the forthcoming period. The Russian delegation fully supports the draft resolution.

Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): Last year was a year of significant change for the future of Afghanistan, with the signing of the Bonn Agreement, the establishment of the Transitional Authority in Afghanistan, the successful conclusion of the Loya Jirga and the swearing in of a new Transitional Authority in Afghanistan.

In Tajikistan we are carefully following developments in neighbouring Afghanistan. We sincerely hope that the fraternal Afghan people will be able to surmount the obstacles on the road to national reconciliation and unity. My Government is providing all possible assistance to the democratically elected leadership of the country. We are stepping up our own humanitarian and reconstruction assistance activities to aid that neighbouring country. Tajikistan fully supports the Government of President Hamid Karzai. We optimistically view the positive processes that are gaining momentum in Afghanistan. It is commendable that the country is establishing an effective political system and that the first steps have been taken to restore what was the unbalanced socio-economic structure of Afghanistan.

It should be noted that the presence of the International Security Assistance Force has helped strengthen the people's faith in the security situation in the capital, which has had an immediate impact in spurring economic activity in Kabul. We are also obviously pleased that, since the fall of the Taliban regime, which was hostile to its people, women are now playing a greater role in the country's rebirth. With the Government's provision of wide-ranging support, girls have gone back to school, noticeable changes have taken place in the role played by civil society and there has been a significant reinvigoration, not only of political life, but, significantly, of cultural life as well. Hundreds of thousands of Afghan refugees have returned to their native land.

The contribution of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has been significant with regard to all the changes that have been achieved, thanks to the efforts of the Afghan people themselves and their courageous political leadership. UNAMA has been skilfully and intelligently led by Ambassador Brahimi. We in Tajikistan appreciate his dedication to the successful implementation of the peace process in Afghanistan. We will continue to provide our full cooperation to him and do everything we can to help him in his arduous yet noble mission.

In noting the success achieved, we must not forget that we have been untying the Afghan knot for over 20 years. It is very complex and has many layers. We are convinced that we must not be complacent about the Afghan settlement. Even brief pauses in the political process, humanitarian and reconstruction work, not to mention our anti-terrorist work, could erase achievements made overall and postpone positive developments in the Afghan peace process. We cannot allow destructive forces to rear their heads once again and plunge Afghanistan again into lawlessness and darkness.

Unfortunately, such forces exist and are letting themselves be known. The lessons of the peace process in Tajikistan have taught us that, unless all sectors of society are politically and morally accountable to the nation, it is impossible to achieve peace, national reconciliation and stability. It is critically important that they understand the need to set aside existing disagreements, without which it will be difficult to achieve national unity and full stability in the country.

We have a vital interest in establishing a comprehensive peace, normalizing the situation and rebuilding war-torn Afghanistan. Lasting stability will be the principal factor for peace and security in the region. It is important that the international community continue to provide all possible assistance to the Afghan Government, which, in playing a leading role in the reconstruction of its country, cannot meet the challenge of recreating and restoring Afghanistan without consistent and growing support. Honouring the commitments undertaken at the Tokyo Conference is therefore of critical importance.

Establishing peace and stability in Afghanistan is also being significantly hampered by the illicit drug trade. The Taliban left behind a fully functional system for the production and marketing of narcotics. The "heroin factory" continues to operate at full capacity. There is a steady demand in Europe for its lethal product, which transits through the States of Central Asia.

We in Tajikistan are especially and keenly affected by this terrible threat and are resisting it. In

the past two years, the volume of confiscated drugs, particularly heroin, has grown ten-fold. We endorse the approaches articulated in the strategic plan of action to provide assistance to Afghanistan in its fight against drugs. We also believe that it is high time to establish an effective anti-narcotics coalition that would not only resist the drug threat, but also assist the Government of Afghanistan in satisfying the basic needs of farmers and to provide viable alternatives to poppy cultivation.

Today's discussion of the issue of the situation in Afghanistan demonstrates once again the extent to which the international community and the United Nations are interested in a peaceful, stable, united, neutral and steadily developing Afghanistan, whose courageous people are now building a new life. In Tajikistan, we believe that if the United Nations maintains its key role in the Afghan settlement, the positive trends will continue to gain momentum and that this will ultimately lead to the establishment of peace, national harmony and stability in Afghanistan.

The Tajik delegation fully supports the draft resolution on Afghanistan that has been submitted today by the delegation of Germany, in which are reflected both the recent changes in Afghan society and the critical challenges that remain to be resolved as we seek to restore that country in the coming phase.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): My delegation would like to commend the President of the General Assembly on his initiative in convening the recent open-ended panel discussion on Afghanistan, consistent with his efforts to revitalize the work of the General Assembly through more interactive discussions of important issues on the Assembly's agenda. Clearly, Afghanistan provides an important case study of the difficulties of providing international assistance to a country devastated by conflict, which will yield important lessons for the future, and the panel discussion was an extremely useful exercise. We are grateful for the report on the outcome of the panel discussion conveyed to the General Assembly this morning.

It is clear from the Secretary-General's report that, despite the ouster of the Taliban from power a year ago, the difficult struggle to bring stability to Afghanistan continues on many fronts. Admittedly, impressive progress — politically and economically — has been made since the Bonn conference. However, much more needs to done, which will require continued and enhanced economic support and an expanded international security presence, without which many of the achievements made thus far could be jeopardized. In this context, my country is proud to have made a modest contribution towards the economic reconstruction of Afghanistan, in line with the pledge we made during the Tokyo Conference. We look forward to cooperating closely with the Government of Afghanistan in the context of our bilateral relations and to seeing in what way or ways we could be of further assistance.

The success of the post-conflict reconstruction of Afghanistan is based on a three-pronged strategy: establishing security; restoring good governance, which includes the rule of law; and creating economic opportunity. Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, warned of dire consequences should the Transitional Government fail to achieve these objectives. Failure could lead to fragmentation and the re-emergence of extremism, which could once again invite external interference. Again, given the history of the Afghan conflict, it is vitally important to prevent and pre-empt the defection of disaffected Afghans from the Bonn process, which would be disastrous to the peace-building and reconstruction process.

Given the enormous scope of the problems faced by Afghanistan and of their complexity, it is imperative that a comprehensive or holistic approach be taken in tackling the post-conflict situation in that country, as opposed to a piecemeal approach — a point that both the Afghanistan Government and the United Nations itself have underscored. While the Afghanistan experience may be unique in many ways, it is nevertheless useful to draw from lessons learned in other situations. In this regard, it is worth noting the observations made by Paddy Ashdown, the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the efficacy of according democracy top priority in a post-conflict situation. In an article published in *The New York Times* on 28 October 2002, he observed that:

> "In hindsight, we should have put the establishment of the rule of law first, for everything else depends on it: a functioning economy, a free and fair political system, the development of civil society, public confidence in police and the courts."

His views are equally pertinent to the situation in Afghanistan.

It is important to ensure that, as part of this comprehensive strategy for Afghanistan, the Government is enabled to assert its authority and to provide security to the rest of the country, not just around Kabul. This will no doubt present an enormous challenge to a reconstituted Afghan army that is currently being formed, given the political realities of the country, which have been characterized by factionalism and warlordism. An assessment of this important and sensitive aspect of the peace-building process in Afghanistan, in the context of the political stability of the country, would be extremely useful for the international community, particularly the donor community.

Another issue of particular interest to the international community would be an estimate of the operational requirements of an expanded security force that would bridge the security gap and lay the foundation for the rule of law. The International Security Assistance Force, to its credit, has achieved much success in Kabul. We hope that with the consolidation of the authority of the Government and more forthcoming support of the international community in this area the security blanket that has been established around the capital could eventually be extended to cover the entire country. Needless to say, a secure environment is imperative both for economic reconstruction and for the dispensing of humanitarian assistance to vulnerable sectors of Afghan society, namely, women, children, the infirm and internally displaced persons. This is so vital to the country in the short term.

A crucial element of any peace-building process is the successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants. In the case of Afghanistan, the Government, in collaboration with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, is developing a pilot project — the Afghan Demobilization, Disarmament and Rehabilitation Programme. The Government is trying to remedy the problem with the setting up of a commission on 15 July to disarm and disband private armies. But this resolve must be supported by strong and effective enforcement measures, a capacity that is seriously lacking today. At a practical level, special attention should be paid to the long-term prospects of demobilizing, disarming and reintegrating the warlords and their followers who are about to lose their livelihoods. Failure in this important area might well lead to an unravelling of the fragile peace.

In this regard, Japan's commitment to accelerate efforts towards DDR and its Register for Peace project are most commendable. It would register former combatants who are committed to peace and ensure that through vocational training, they make an appropriate contribution to society. Through a successful DDR programme, turning swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks would not be an unattainable goal. The successful DDR exercise in Sierra Leone is a clear testament of this.

We agree with the Secretary-General's assessment that impressive first steps have been taken to regenerate the disrupted socio-economic fabric of the country and that this recovery and reconstruction can only be sustained through the country's reintegration into the regional economic hub. As the lead agency, the United Nations Development Programme has played a crucial role galvanizing international support for reconstruction efforts — trying to match the needs of the Afghan Government with aid from donor countries. Major achievements have been made: 1 million refugees returned, 3 million children introduced to the education system, widespread vaccination programmes, the control of a locust plague, the near doubling of food production, hundreds of thousands of days of work targeted at repairing essential infrastructure and payment of salaries to civil servants. Notwithstanding the impressive progress, more efforts need to be made to overcome the shortfall, which some have attributed not so much to the failure of donors to deliver on pledges but to a collective underestimation of Afghanistan's needs. If true, this should be immediately rectified.

By one estimate, Afghan women had previously represented 50 per cent of the civil service, 40 per cent of doctors and 70 per cent of schoolteachers, constituting a crucial economic force for the rehabilitation of the country. Now 85 per cent of women are illiterate and only 8 per cent of girls are in schools. If these figures are an approximate reflection of the realities on the ground, clearly a huge amount of support and retraining will be needed to ensure that women are adequately represented in the workplace. The emancipation of the Afghan women after years of discrimination must continue unabated. They must be given a key role in the reconstruction of their nation alongside men with an equal right to participate in the

challenging task of nation-building. Equally important is the development of programmes to deal with the problem of another vulnerable group, namely children, who have been traumatized by the bitter conflict and must be rehabilitated, educated and trained as good and useful citizens of a new and united nation. As an indispensable national asset for the country's future, investment in children should be an important and integral part of an overall strategic approach towards the reconstruction of the country.

The re-emergence of opium production and trafficking is also a matter of grave concern. President Karzai has inherited this festering problem and his Government has demonstrated a strong commitment and the requisite political will to eradicate production. Clearly, its elimination could only be facilitated when the political and social stability of the country is attained within the broader economic context. Unfortunately, these efforts are complicated by a number of factors, not the least of which is the continued influence of the regional warlords on both opium trade and production. Clearly, the Government of Afghanistan needs the continued support and assistance of the international community on this equally important front.

No less important is the need for concerted efforts to facilitate the social integration of the various ethnic and religious communities in the country, which will provide the necessary glue that will bond the Afghan society closer together in the post-conflict era, premised on tolerance and understanding. In order to promote tolerance, there must be open dialogue for without dialogue there will be no national cohesion and without that there will be no real peace. As a multi-racial nation that has managed to harness the vitality and strengths of its diverse people through its policies of tolerance and accommodation, Malaysia can attest to this.

Security, good governance and reconstruction are the most critical problems confronting post-war Afghanistan. The most challenging tasks faced by the Government of President Karzai are threefold, namely, to ensure security throughout the country, assert the Government's authority over the provinces and mobilize resources for national reconstruction. The Government's success in undertaking all these tasks is contingent upon the continued support of the people of Afghanistan, as well as the strong and sustained support of the international community in all these three areas. Our failure to assist Afghanistan in nation-building and in reconstituting itself as a viable and united nation that is at peace with itself and at peace with the rest of the world would have serious repercussions on that country as well as to regional and international peace and security as the recent past had clearly demonstrated.

Finally, my delegation is pleased to join other delegations in sponsoring the draft resolution contained in document A/57/L.56, just introduced by the representative of Germany, to whom we express our deep appreciation.

Mr. Kulyk (Ukraine): Today, we are addressing one of the most important issues on the agenda of the United Nations — the situation in Afghanistan, where for the last year fundamental changes have been taking place. It is the first year in the past decade when there was no civil war in the country. The Bonn Agreement, which was signed a year ago, became a tangible result of the efforts towards restoring the peace and statehood of Afghanistan.

We are particularly pleased to express our deepest gratitude to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his Special Representative, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, for their tremendous and continued support to Afghanistan at this critical juncture of Afghan history.

Ukraine welcomes the gradual re-establishment of government institutions in the country. The Loya Jirga held in June was another significant milestone in the recent history of Afghanistan.

The work done by the Transitional Authority in implementation of the Bonn Agreement is impressive. A visible sign of progress can be found in the successful campaign to get children back to school, the eradication of poliomyelitis, the introduction of a new Afghan currency and the restoration of the financial system. The massive voluntary return of refugees to Afghanistan, the largest in the world in 30 years, is also a sign of progress.

Ukraine particularly notes the positive results of the activities of the Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan. In that regard, we welcome Afghanistan's signing of the 1997 Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty and its holding of an international conference at Kabul on that issue. Ukraine is ready to provide assistance and share with the Afghan authorities our experience in mine-clearance operations.

Despite the achievements I have mentioned, we all know that Afghanistan still faces a grave humanitarian challenge and acute security problems. The political and security environment remains unstable. In that regard, we are deeply concerned about the possibility of a return to warlordism and lawlessness in the country.

We welcome the Security Council's adoption of resolution 1444 (2002), on the extension of the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). We continue to believe that ISAF is the best available instrument at the moment to improve security across the country.

We also express our full support for the efforts of the international community to create a national Afghan army and police force that are acceptable to the overwhelming majority of the Afghan people. We are therefore encouraged by President Hamid Karzai's recent decree on the creation of the new Afghan army. We commend the leading role and contributions of the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Turkey, Germany and the Netherlands in providing training. We also commend the Government of Japan for its assistance in demobilization programmes.

We believe that it is vital that a clear plan of activities for the new security institutions be worked out. We would like to stress that success in the security sphere depends first and foremost on the commitment of the major Afghan factions. It is primarily their responsibility to set aside short-term factional interests and avoid the existing divisions.

It is obvious that peace and stability in Afghanistan depend on the international community's sustained engagement in providing funding for reconstruction. We owe a particular debt of gratitude to the donor community for its assistance to Afghanistan. But we would like to note that the majority of the financial pledges made to Afghanistan at the Tokyo Conference remain unfulfilled. The reconstruction of the economic and social infrastructure remains critical to the viability of the peace process. In that connection, we fully support the approach proposed by Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi regarding the need for labour-intensive projects throughout Afghanistan to support long-term recovery efforts and address the causes of poverty.

The fight against the production of illegal drugs is another problem that calls for the international community's special attention. We reiterate our position with regard to the Transitional Authority's decision to ban poppy production. It is regrettable that the comprehensive anti-narcotics strategy, including the provision of alternative livelihoods to poppy cultivation, has faltered this year. In our view, the problem will never be resolved without feasible alternatives to poppy cultivation, at least at the farm-gate level.

Ukraine expresses its strong belief that rebuilding the economy and infrastructure, the issue of refugees and the drafting of a new constitution will remain the priority tasks of the Transitional Authority in the coming year. We are convinced that, through its renewed Mission, the United Nations will continue to play the central role in facilitating the transformation of Afghanistan into a secure and stable State.

The Government of Ukraine expresses its readiness to cooperate effectively with the Transitional Authority through the United Nations, as well as on the bilateral level, in order to achieve the goals outlined in the decisions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

As a sponsor, Ukraine attaches great importance to today's adoption of the draft resolution on Afghanistan prepared by the delegation of Germany. We believe that draft resolution comprehensively reflects the support of the international community for the goal of achieving lasting peace in Afghanistan.

Mr. Al-Kubaisi (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to express my congratulations to the President of the General Assembly for the skilful way in which he has conducted the open debate on the situation in Afghanistan since the meetings of the open-ended panel of the General Assembly held in the Trusteeship Council Chamber on 18 November 2002. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General and his capable assistants for the excellent reports they have submitted to us on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security. I also wish to thank them for the valuable report on emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan.

Those reports illustrate the difficult and tragic situation experienced by the Afghan people as a whole, including Afghans living in the country, as well as those in refugee camps in neighbouring countries. Those reports make us realize the extent of the

difficulties experienced by the Transitional Authority in confronting the arduous problems left behind by decades of conflict, war and political, economic, security and social instability. The physical infrastructure of the country has also been profoundly affected. We cannot expect Afghanistan to get back on its feet unless the Afghan people unite in a spirit of solidarity and responsibility. The challenges they face are numerous and complex, and the situation is still extremely unstable.

The Transitional Authority took office after the fall of the Taliban regime in November 2001, the signing of the Bonn Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions in December 2001, and the Emergency Loya Jirga convened in March 2002. The situation in Afghanistan has greatly evolved on several levels since then. The international community, represented by some of its members and by organizations of the United Nations, has played a commendable role in strengthening security and restoring relative stability in that country. With the assumption of power by the Transitional Authority, United Nations agencies have begun their admirable work, setting up many programmes and projects to improve education and health and to make people aware of the threats they may face in the future.

Among the praiseworthy efforts made by international organizations, we cannot fail to mention the assistance given to displaced persons within and outside the country in order to enable them voluntarily to return to the homes and villages that they had to flee as a result of war and insecurity. Specialized teams are also involved in demining throughout the country.

Afghanistan is one of the most heavily mine-laden countries; it is estimated that there are almost 10 million mines throughout the land. Those mines claim five to 10 victims daily, many of them innocent children.

Afghanistan continues to face extremely daunting humanitarian challenges due to a complex combination of factors, including drought, food insecurity and poppy cultivation. As a result, we must envisage humanitarian intervention in Afghanistan, because winter is approaching and millions of Afghans will find themselves in an even more difficult situation, which will last throughout the winter. Therefore they are in urgent need of emergency assistance.

What complicates matters, however, and makes their needs even more urgent is the fact that the central Government does not have the financial resources and determination to meet those threats and challenges. As a result, in response to the humanitarian situation of the Afghan people and the suffering they are experiencing, a meeting of the donor Islamic States was convened in Doha at the beginning of November in order to create a special trust fund that would assist the Afghan people. That meeting was held following a proposal made by His Highness Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, at the emergency ministerial conference held by the Islamic States in Doha in October 2001.

The Amir of Qatar took the opportunity to donate $10 million for the creation of such a special fund in order to help the Afghan people. The fund's purpose is to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people, especially in the areas of food, health care, education and the safeguarding of social stability, which would help consolidate international efforts to rebuild Afghanistan.

The fund also aims to train the Afghan people so that they can return to normal living conditions. It will also assist in the economic reconstruction of the country and encourage displaced persons to return to their homes, providing them with security and stability.

The meeting of the Islamic States was able to raise part of the sum that is needed, and it is hoped that later on it will be possible to achieve the fund's goal of $100 million. This hinges on the voluntary contributions to be announced by Member States.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Today we are not only considering the latest report of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan but also commemorating the first anniversary of the Bonn Agreement. Pakistan attaches special importance to this historic Agreement, which set in motion a process for the rebuilding of political institutions and the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan. We reaffirm our resolve to work with the international community to promote peace, stability and economic development in Afghanistan.

Following the tragic events of 11 September, Pakistan took strategic decisions, based on the principles of the United Nations Charter and in its own national interests. Pakistan is, and will remain, a key member of the global coalition against international terrorism. At the same time, Pakistan has offered, and will continue to provide, its full support to the efforts

initiated by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Ambassador Brahimi, for peace and reconstruction in Afghanistan. It is gratifying that Ambassador Brahimi chose Pakistan as his first stop in the quest for viable political arrangements in Afghanistan, a quest that culminated in the Bonn Agreement. Since then, Pakistan has worked closely with the international community for the implementation of the Agreement. We are satisfied with the progress achieved thus far in the Bonn process. We appreciate the efforts of the Afghan Transitional Government and of President Karzai to restore normalcy to a nation torn apart by over two decades of war and turmoil.

Pakistan remains committed to the promotion of peace, reconstruction and rehabilitation in Afghanistan. Our relations with Afghanistan are based on unbreakable fraternal bonds between our peoples and on a shared history, a common faith, and a similar language and culture. Pakistan will continue to extend its fullest cooperation to the Afghan Government. At the Tokyo Conference, Pakistan pledged $100 million towards Afghanistan's reconstruction, and $20 million has already been disbursed. Our assistance is being provided in areas identified by the Afghan Government and is being channelled through the central authority in Kabul. Within its limited resources, Pakistan is committed to providing all possible help and assistance, as required by the Afghan Government, in the onerous task of the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan's socio-economic fabric.

In addition, Pakistan would like to see a greater integration of Afghanistan into regional economic cooperation structures. In this regard, we are heartened by the agreement reached to construct a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan through Afghanistan. Similarly, we welcome the initiatives taken by the United Nations Development Programme to foster development cooperation between Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran.

We also strongly support the various trade liberalization initiatives being proposed by the Economic Cooperation Organization to integrate Afghanistan's economy with that of the countries which are its neighbours. We feel that regional economic cooperation can build solid and mutually beneficial bridges between Afghanistan and its immediate neighbours. For its part, Pakistan would be prepared to explore the conclusion of a free trade agreement with Afghanistan.

Security is the most important issue facing Afghanistan today. Without security, there can be no durable peace and no economic reconstruction or development. The campaign to eliminate terrorism is not fully won in Afghanistan. The threats to security in Afghanistan are multifaceted. First, coalition forces are still pursuing the remnants of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban across Afghanistan. The final mopping-up operation is likely to be painstaking and time-consuming. Pakistan is cooperating in the interdiction of terrorists who may seek to cross over into Pakistan.

Secondly, security continues to be under threat from a variety of other sources as well, including banditry, tribal and regional rivalries and the quest of certain individuals for power and influence. All of those factors have contributed to the challenging security environment in Afghanistan. The victory of the rule of law over the rule of the gun remains to be won. Failure to take timely action for the consolidation of security in Afghanistan could prove extremely costly in the future.

Pakistan continues to urge the international community to expand its security presence throughout Afghanistan as a means of consolidating peace and security in the entire country and thus ensuring that the writ of President Karzai's Government runs over the entire country. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which is currently headed by our brotherly country, Turkey, has made commendable progress in enlarging and enhancing security during the past year. We feel that the size and mandate of ISAF could be expanded to cover all the major urban centres of Afghanistan. If this is not possible, however, we would urge the international community to adopt alternative approaches to building security in Afghanistan. In this regard, we are heartened by the initiatives taken by the United States forces in Afghanistan to provide greater security and confidence through direct interaction with Afghans in various parts of the country. We also welcome the intention of the Afghan Government to disarm different armed factions and militias in various parts of Afghanistan. If that difficult task can be accomplished, it will result in a significant improvement in the security environment.

Pakistan also supports the ongoing process of creating an Afghan national army and police force, as

well as all other security sector reforms. We remain ready to provide any assistance to the Afghan Government in this respect.

Peace, security, economic development and reconstruction are inextricably linked. While reconstruction is difficult in the absence of peace and security, stability can be considerably bolstered through economic rehabilitation and reconstruction. We agree with paragraph 90 of the Secretary-General's report (A/57/410) that the Afghan Transitional Government "cannot accomplish this task alone and requires sustained assistance from the international community".

It is imperative to maintain the impetus for the process of reconstruction and rehabilitation. The priority areas that need immediate attention are the reconstruction of destroyed infrastructure and the rehabilitation of agriculture. The reconstruction of roads and irrigation systems would provide jobs for hundreds of thousands of jobless Afghans, in addition to facilitating trade. Health and education also need urgent attention. We urge the international community to make good on the pledges made for the reconstruction of Afghanistan and to accelerate further assistance in the priority areas.

Over the past two decades, Pakistan has hosted millions of Afghan refugees — largely, I should say, without assistance from the international community. This has imposed a heavy burden on our economy. It is a tribute to President Karzai's Government that more than 1 million refugees living in Pakistan have returned voluntarily to their homeland. About 2 million still remain in Pakistan. The process of the repatriation of refugees has slowed down because of the lack of adequate economic activity for the returnees in Afghanistan. This is an area that requires greater international assistance. We hope that the international community will also target assistance to the rural areas from which the refugees originated, so as to ensure that those who return home have a reason to stay there. In this regard, we support the Secretary-General's recommendation that sustained reintegration must be based on an integrated approach involving coordinated food-security and cash-for-work strategies, together with support for the key areas of water, health and education.

Pakistan remains committed to the establishment of durable peace and stability in Afghanistan and to its security and territorial integrity. We are confident that the democratic process in Pakistan will assist in strengthening the ties between the Pakistani and Afghan peoples. We abide strictly by the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, and Pakistan has already given this assurance to Afghanistan at the highest level. In this regard, we look forward to the ministerial meeting, on 22 December, of the immediate neighbours of Afghanistan.

Pakistan will continue to work with the Afghan Government and the international community to promote the economic development, reconstruction and rehabilitation of our close neighbour, Afghanistan.

Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to be taking part in this debate, under the agenda item on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security. I should like first of all to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General for his useful and comprehensive report, as well as for the efforts he is making in this area. I should also like to thank his Special Representative, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, for his perseverance and mediation efforts aimed at restoring peace and security in Afghanistan.

The Bonn meeting on 5 December 2001, the convening of the Loya Jirga in June 2002 and the formation of the new Afghan Government under the presidency of Mr. Karzai, are important developments in a country that has suffered from 25 years of wars and conflicts that have destroyed its economic infrastructure and caused great human tragedy.

Although the achievements in Afghanistan over the past year do not measure up to the expectations of the Afghan people and the international community, they nevertheless inspire optimism and confidence. The Afghan institutions have begun to assume responsibility and to play their role in restoring peace and security, fighting terrorism, illegal drug-trafficking and poppy cultivation and providing necessary humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people.

The tireless efforts of the international community to set up a police force and an army to ensure peace, security and stability in Afghanistan, as well as generous assistance for reconstruction, reflect the international community's solidarity with the Afghan people aimed at restoring a life of dignity to all the citizens of Afghanistan.

In the interest of peace, security and stability in Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia did not hesitate to provide the necessary assistance to that country. We contributed $20 million to the Afghan budget in January 2002, as well as $1 million to the United Nations fund to cover Transitional Authority salaries. Furthermore, during the conference hosted by Japan on 22 January 2002, Saudi Arabia pledged $220 million over the next three years in support of international efforts. Saudi Arabia also contributed to the fund to support development projects in Afghanistan that can have a swift and positive impact on the Afghan people.

We have supported medium-term and long-term development projects to help guarantee the return of Afghan refugees and displaced persons. Saudi Arabia has also provided a total of $522 million of government financial assistance for the Afghan refugees. As of the end of 2001, contributions collected from Saudi Arabia's various regions amounted to approximately $37 million. In July 2001, Saudi Arabia contributed $500,000 to a United Nations programme to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan, in addition to material assistance, comprising food, medication and clothing for needy and displaced persons in Afghanistan valued at more than $10 million and provided through the Saudi Relief Committee. In December 2001, we also donated $500,000 to a United Nations programme to cover emergency humanitarian needs. In addition, in October 2001, Saudi Arabia donated one million doses of meningitis vaccine, through the World Health Organization, for the Afghan refugees on the border with Pakistan. Moreover, together with the United States and Japan, we have provided $30 million to rebuild the road between Kabul and Herat.

However, Saudi Arabia was not content with providing financial and economic assistance to Afghanistan; we also participated in a meeting of the Afghan Reconstruction Steering Group, held at Brussels on 20 and 21 December 2001 thanks to a European Union initiative. In addition, we took part in the first high-level meeting to consider the issue of providing international reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan, held at Washington on 20 November 2001, as well as in the donor conference on the reconstruction of Afghanistan held at Tokyo on 21 and 22 January 2002.

While we welcome the international community's efforts to restore security, stability and peace in Afghanistan and to rebuild the country, we invite the brotherly Afghan people to overcome their differences, to achieve reconciliation and to shoulder their responsibility to move towards a more dignified and better future.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Our meeting today marks the passage of more than a year since the start of a new phase in Afghanistan that began with the tragic events of 11 September 2001. At that time, the international community committed itself to correcting the situation in Afghanistan and to helping that country to overcome the civil war and the fragmentation that its struggling people had experienced, which had led to the displacement of millions of Afghans far from their homes and their families.

The year that has passed has shown the importance of actions undertaken by the United Nations under the direction of Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, whose positive contribution has highlighted the importance of understanding all aspects of the Afghan problem, including the country's various religious, tribal and cultural affiliations. The role of the Afghan Loya Jirga proved to be essential in the election of a national Afghan Government whose independence and sovereignty would be respected.

Issues related to security, stability, the cultivation of illicit drugs, the weakness of the national economy and the domination of Afghan society by warlords remain serious obstacles to a comprehensive resolution of the situation in Afghanistan and are a source of international concern. At a time when the International Security Assistance Force is making a positive contribution to the security situation in Kabul, the lack of security in most other parts of Afghan territory continues to threaten the political progress that has been achieved. It could in fact threaten the credibility of the international action being taken in Afghanistan, especially because of the direct relationship between the political situation and humanitarian activities that are affected by the security situation. The security situation has been exacerbated by assassination attempts against government ministers and even President Karzai himself. The weak relationship between the central national leadership in Kabul and leaders in other Afghan towns and villages has resulted in fragmentation of the Afghan economy and has weakened Afghanistan's control over its rich resources.

That has encouraged the continuation of poppy cultivation and trade as a primary economic activity to finance warlord operations.

Although the peace process is moving forward, we shall undoubtedly encounter new problems and perhaps setbacks in that area. The international community and the United Nations have only one option: to continue to play their positive role, working tirelessly to guarantee the successful implementation of all the provisions of the Bonn Agreement, including the establishment of a Constitutional Commission and of a body to prepare for general elections. The international community and all concerned parties in Afghanistan must respect the country's independence, the desires of its people and the principle of non-interference in its internal affairs, so as not to threaten the progress already made by the international community and to prevent a retreat from that progress.

With regard to foreign interference, all those who spoke during the open-ended panel on Afghanistan, held approximately three weeks ago under the chairmanship of the President of the General Assembly, agreed that such interference would be dangerous if it were to continue. Egypt insists that all should respect the principle of refraining from negative interference in Afghan affairs, in order not to further exacerbate the situation of that Islamic country.

Finally, Egypt welcomes all of the international community's efforts in Afghanistan under United Nations auspices. Egypt is therefore sponsoring draft resolution A/57/L.56, in the conviction that all peoples have the right to live in peace, security, stability and independence, safe from any external pressures or ambitions.

Mr. Nambiar (India): It was exactly one year ago that the signing of the Bonn Agreement cleared the way for the political transition of Afghanistan from a shattered and war-ravaged nation to a proud, democratic, multi-ethnic and constructive member of the comity of nations. One year down the line, this debate provides us with an opportunity to take stock of the progress achieved in Afghanistan so far and to see what more requires to be done.

In political terms, the establishment of the Interim Administration last December, the successful conclusion of the Emergency Loya Jirga in June this year and the subsequent appointment of a Transitional Authority of Afghanistan represent important milestones. Several key elements of President Hamid Karzai's reform agenda have been set into motion. These include the establishment of a Defence Commission and a National Security Council, and the assumption of civilian control over the armed forces. Other achievements include the process of reconstruction, which has begun in earnest in infrastructure areas such as the construction of a national roadway system, in the return of as many as 1.7 million refugees and in the reinstitution of an educational system that has permitted as many as 3 million children, including 1 million girls, to return to school. Also noteworthy are the measures initiated to set up an independent human rights commission at the national level in that country.

The Secretary-General, in his report entitled "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security", contained in document A/57/487, has pointed out that the key impediment to implementation of the Bonn Agreement remains the deteriorating security climate. This is a matter of serious concern to my country. Reports of disturbances along Afghanistan's southern and south-eastern borders can only be attributed to the renewed efforts of Al-Qaeda and Taliban cadres to destabilize the country. Unfortunately, those elements continue to receive moral and material support from their erstwhile mentors across the border, who have yet to reconcile themselves to the loss of the influence and power they once wielded in Afghanistan. We reiterate the importance of ensuring that the resurgent forces of religious fundamentalism and extremism, manifested in Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, are fully neutralized, and that the intensity of the anti-terror campaign is maintained.

Meanwhile, it is encouraging to note the abatement of tensions in northern Afghanistan following increased cooperation among leaders in the area. The Secretary-General, in paragraph 35 of his report, has drawn attention to this development. The contribution of the Joint Security Commission, in which the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is represented, towards the modest success achieved is commendable and deserves to be recognized.

In the context of ensuring security for Afghanistan and of the need to prevent a resurgence of the pressures of external forces in that country, we note a reference in the final communiqué of the 2 December

2002 Petersberg Conference of Foreign Ministers, to the intention of the Afghan Government to sign later this month a declaration of good-neighbourly relations with six of its neighbours that would, inter alia, affirm the principle of non-interference by those countries in Afghanistan's internal affairs. India welcomes this development.

India believes that a major element of the institutional reform agenda in Afghanistan should involve the rebuilding of the country's security structures. To that end, we welcome the recent decision taken to create a new Afghan national army. We applaud the fact that the new army would be a professional force drawn from the different regions and ethnic groupings. We believe that, in the interest of the sustainability of the Afghan security apparatus, it is important that the security structures in Afghanistan be established as Afghan institutions, flowing out of an intra-Afghan process relevant to and targeted at meeting Afghan needs in terms of dealing with internal and external threats. The task of the disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation of former Afghan fighters and that of the disbanding of local militias are crucial and need to be treated with great attention and sensitivity.

Other important tasks and challenges before the Government include broadening the central Government's authority, preparation of the Constitution, building the rule of law and preparing the country for the elections in 2004. For that purpose, the Government of Afghanistan requires more resources than are currently available. In paragraph 55 of his report, the Secretary-General has estimated that

> "the total needs of a country recovering from over two decades of conflict, destruction and drought outstrip even the $1.8 billion generously pledged at the donor conference held in Tokyo".

The situation has become worse as a result of the prolonged drought in several parts of the country.

We are deeply concerned by the reports of increase in poppy cultivation in the country. The Secretary-General observes in his report that the earlier momentum for putting in place an anti-narcotics strategy has faltered. Eradicating illicit poppy cultivation and breaking the drug-trafficking terror-group nexus are also areas that have major implications for regional and global security.

It is important for the international community to continue supporting Afghanistan at this critical juncture of its development. Any weakening of support or diversion of international assistance from Afghanistan can only benefit the regressive and obscurantist elements that have proved disastrous for the country in the recent past.

We have noted the priority the Secretary-General's report attaches to the development of Afghanistan's economy. We agree that initiatives to enhance the Government's capacity, encourage private sector growth and to reform fiscal policy are important determinants towards the attainment of healthy economic growth in Afghanistan.

India has committed itself to assisting Afghanistan in its nation-building efforts. Though not a traditional donor, we have made our own contribution towards Afghanistan's reconstruction efforts. By the end of this year the Government of India will have disbursed about one third of its financial assistance of $100 million pledged to Afghanistan. This has included a budget subsidy of $10 million disbursed last July and the supply of three Airbus aircraft as a gift to Ariana Afghan Airlines. Indian assistance has been focused in the critical areas of health, education, transport, civil aviation, water, power, agriculture, the judiciary and banking. Fifty buses have been provided to the Afghan Government. More than 18 tons of material was sent to set up a camp to provide artificial limbs for amputees in Kabul. A computer training centre has been established and is being run in Afghanistan by Indian experts. India has also made a commitment to provide 1 million tons of wheat as food aid through the World Food Programme's school feeding scheme in Afghanistan.

In extending our assistance, we have scrupulously adhered to the concept of Afghan ownership and prioritization in designing and implementing programmes for Afghanistan. We are in the process of discussing a bilateral preferential trading agreement with Afghanistan. India has also organized an extremely successful industrial exhibition in Kabul in September 2002. Our hope is that such initiatives would enable Afghanistan to resume its economic integration with the countries in its region, thus restoring vitality to its nascent economy.

Before concluding, I would like to place on record our sincere appreciation for the contribution of

Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the UNAMA team, as well as the other United Nations agencies involved in Afghanistan, towards the development and progress achieved in Afghanistan during the past year. Their efforts in the coming months will continue to be vitally important.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I would like to make an announcement regarding an addition to the programme of work of the plenary of the General Assembly for the morning of Wednesday, 11 December 2002. The General Assembly will take up agenda item 3, the report of the Credentials Committee, as the first item, in order to consider the report of the Committee, issued this morning in document A/57/634.

Postponement of the date of recess

The Acting President: I should like to draw the attention of members to the date of recess of the current session. Members will recall that at its 19th plenary meeting, on 20 September 2002, the General Assembly decided that the fifty-seventh session would recess on Wednesday, 11 December 2002. However, in view of the work that remains to be done for this part of the session, I would like to propose to the Assembly that it postpone the date of recess of the current session by one week to Wednesday, 18 December 2002. If there is no objection may I take it that the Assembly agrees to this proposal?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.